

## The Killer by flippyspoon

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**Summary:**

Steve kills monsters.

## The Killer

Steve kills monsters.

It's just a thing that he does when he's not working for his dad; on the phone with a client or attempting to understand revenue spreadsheets or sitting in dull fucking meetings fidgeting with his tie.

The Upside Down isn't going anywhere, or at least they haven't figured out how to close The Gate for good so every once in awhile, Steve gets a phone call or there's a pounding on his door and Steve kills monsters. It surprises him as much as anybody that if some monsters need killing he's the second person to be called after Hopper.

So maybe it's because Steve kills monsters that when he's stopped at a traffic light in the Beemer to go pick up Billy at Hawkins Video Kingdom—tie loosened, hair askew, following a long dull day of report writing—and he sees Neil Hargrove crossing the street, he's overtaken by a reflexive urge that he didn't know he possessed.

They haven't seen Neil in a little while.

Susan kicked Neil out just a week before Billy turned eighteen. Billy found this so hysterical he had to get wasted that night, but he ended up crying anyway. Neil lives in Indianapolis but California boy Billy lives in Hawkins. Because somehow he's gotten to like it, at least for the present. Because he wanted to stay behind and be the brother to Max that he'd never been. Because there are monsters that need killing and he understands that about Steve's life and he's pretty good at killing monsters too.

Indianapolis is also where Steve works. But it's a city, it's not like they've ever run into each other.

Until now.

Neil Hargrove is crossing the street. No one else is in the crosswalk. No one is in front of Steve's car. There is only Steve's car and Neil Hargrove on foot, alone.

*All I have to do is press on the gas, Steve thinks.*

They haven't seen Neil in a while, but Neil is everywhere. Neil would be everywhere if they lived in Los Angeles or Paris or Neptune. Neil is there on days when Steve can tell Billy is believing he's everything Neil ever told him he was. Neil is there on days when Billy is as angry as when Steve first met him and he has to go away, sometimes for more than a day, until he slips into bed next to Steve in the middle of the night when it's over. Those are bad days. On those days Steve is so angry at Neil Hargrove he has to call Nancy and talk to her about it. Once he was as angry at Neil Hargrove as he'd ever been and he got a monster killing call and he went so hard and took so many risks that he freaked out Billy and the kids and Hopper sat him down and asked him if he was okay and never to pull that death wish shit again.

*All I have to do is press on the gas.*

Steve grips the steering wheel with white knuckles.

It's not happening fast, it's happening way too slowly. Probably because Steve has to concentrate very hard—has to focus on breathing in and out as he stares at Neil walking by, standing up so straight with his military gait—and remind himself that if he murders Neil Hargrove in broad daylight he will go to prison and it will destroy Billy. He has to think about this very hard and grip the steering wheel very tightly.

Neil is safely on the sidewalk before it fully hits Steve that the only thing keeping him from murdering Neil Hargrove is the knowledge that it would just end up hurting Billy more. It's not something he's known about himself til this moment.

He presses on the gas with a lurch, somebody honks, Steve drives on.

His head is pounding.

He doesn't stop until he gets to Hawkins Video, parking behind the shop, waiting for Billy, breathing in and out and thinking of Billy's bad days and Neil Hargrove and killing monsters.

He watches Billy swagger outside, his jacket thrown over his shoulder as he comes to the car, grinning.

Billy gets in the car and Steve finds that he's not together.

Steve says, "Hey."

"Hey," Billy says, and frowns. "Hey. Steve. What's wrong? Something happen?"

"Nothing." Steve says, shaking his head. "Just um. I'm- I'm in a weird mood. Will you tell me if you had a good day?"

"Uh yeah sure, it was good." Billy says, still trying to read Steve, but going along. "Erica Sinclair came in. Tried to rent *A Nightmare on Elm Street*."

"You didn't let her, did you?" Steve says.

"Sure, I did."

"Billy."

"I'm molding young minds. It's what I do." Billy had a good day. Billy is happy and safe. Neil Hargrove is in Indianapolis. Steve lurches forward and hugs Billy's tight. "Steve. Jesus. What the fuck happened?"

"I'll tell you sometime okay," Steve says, squeezing him so tightly, smelling his neck and his hair as Billy's arms come up around him. "Just...let me hold you. And tell me about your good day."

"Right," Billy says softly. "Well... turns out I accidentally slipped Mr. Clarke a porno."

"Mr. Clarke the science teacher?"

"Yep."

"Accidentally?"

"Maybe a little bit on purpose, but he said he watched it with a girlfriend and they liked it."

Steve laughs into Billy's shoulder, but he's teary and he sniffs and Billy says, "Steve..."

"I'll tell you sometime, but not now."

"Because we're having a good day?" Billy says.

"Yeah," Steve says. "No monsters today."